

- Tags must be legible and understandable by all employees.
- Tags and their means of attachment must be made of materials that will withstand the environmental conditions encountered in the workplace.
- Tags may evoke a false sense of security. They are only one part of an overall energy control program.
- Tags must be securely attached to the energy-isolating devices so that they cannot be detached accidentally during use.

If the energy-isolating device is lockable, the employer must use locks unless he or she can demonstrate that the use of tags would provide protection at least as effective as locks and would ensure “full employee protection.”

Full employee protection includes complying with all tagout-related provisions plus implementing additional safety measures that can provide the level of safety equivalent to that obtained by using lockout. This might include removing and isolating a circuit element, blocking a controlling switch, opening an extra disconnecting device, or removing a valve handle to reduce the potential for any inadvertent energization while tags are attached.

Although OSHA acknowledges the existence of energy-isolating devices that cannot be locked out, the standard clearly states that whenever major replacement, repair, renovation or modification of machines or equipment is performed and whenever new machines or equipment are installed, the employer must ensure that the energy-isolating devices for such machines or equipment are lockable. Such modifications and new purchases are most effectively and efficiently made as part of the normal equipment replacement cycle. All newly purchased equipment must be lockable.

### ***Requirements for Lockout/Tagout Devices***

When attached to an energy-isolating device, both lockout and tagout devices used in accordance with the requirements of the standard help protect employees from hazardous energy. A lockout device provides protection by preventing the machine or equipment from becoming energized. A tagout device does so by identifying the energy-isolating device as a source of potential danger; it indicates that the energy-isolating device and the equipment being controlled may not be operated while the tagout device is in place. Whichever devices are used, they must be singularly identified, must be the only devices used for controlling hazardous energy, and must meet the following requirements:

- **Durability**—**lockout** and **tagout** devices must withstand the environment to which they are exposed for the maximum duration of the expected exposure. Tagout devices must be constructed and printed so that they do not deteriorate or become illegible, especially when used in corrosive (acid and alkali chemicals) or wet environments.
- **Standardized**—Both **lockout** and **tagout** devices must be standardized according to either **color, shape or size**. **Tagout** devices must also be standardized according to **print and format**.
- **Substantial**—Lockout and tagout devices must be substantial enough to minimize early or accidental removal. Locks must be substantial to prevent removal except by excessive force of special tools such as bolt cutters or other metal cutting tools. Tag means of attachment must be nonreusable, attachable by hand, self-locking and nonreleasable, with a minimum unlocking strength of no less than 50 pounds. The device for attaching the tag also must have the general design and basic characteristics equivalent to a one-piece nylon cable tie that will withstand all environments and conditions.
- **Identifiable**—Locks and tags must clearly identify the employee who applies them. Tags must also warn against hazardous conditions if the machine or equipment is energized and must include a legend such as the following: **DO NOT START, DO NOT OPEN, DO NOT CLOSE, DO NOT ENERGIZE, DO NOT OPERATE**.